ТЕОРІЯ ТА МЕТОДИКА НАВЧАННЯ ІНОЗЕМНИХ МОВ

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EXPLORING L2 STUDENT PERCEPTIONS TOWARDS SOURCE-BASED EAP WRITING ASSESSMENT TASKS

In an attempt to understand the ways L2 undergraduate students use information from external sources in their writing and to examine what difficulties they encounter during the process, this classroom-based research investigated student writers' perceptions towards their source use, purposes of students' self-reported citation practices, and suggested actions to be taken for progress in source-based writing within the context of freshman English for Academic Purposes (EAP) writing course. Perceptions of 22 freshman student writers were surveyed through an open-ended questionnaire. Questionnaire was given upon the completion of a source-based writing assessment task and it required students to reflect on their writing performance which was produced under examination circumstances. Frequency counts and thematic content analysis revealed several challenges in handling citation practices effectively and a limited range for using citation purposes, mainly limited to attribution of sources. The study has implications for instruction in order to enhance citation practices of emerging L2 student writers..

Keywords: *source-based writing, integrated writing assessment task, EAP, student perceptions.*

1. Introduction

Most student writers in a university setting are required to integrate their own opinions textually with information gathered from sources (Shi, 2004). Consequently, integrating reading, listening and writing is becoming prevalent in assessment of English for Academic Purposes (EAP) rather than testing these skills in isolation. Integrated tasks often involve one or more external reading and/or listening texts/sources. Many students utilize these sources as a repository for grammar structures and vocabulary, organizational patterns and ideas (Leki & Carson,1997; Weigle, 2004).

Source-based writing engages L2 students in summarizing, paraphrasing and synthesizing information from sources effectively into their writing. In the process of constructing their writing, students carry out several interconnected complex writing and reading processes (Spivey, 1984) which poses certain challenges for the student writers. Using sources is framed as "more than providing a name and a date; it is a subjective process of deciding how to make meaning out of the available resources" (Shi, 2010, p.21). In order to master source-based writing comprehension of source materials in depth (Wette, 2010), understanding particular demands of task types (Pecorari, 2003), mastery of "linguistic and authorial intertextual manipulations" (Thompson, Morton & Storch, 2013, p.99), and acknowledg-ment of the mechanics of referencing (Thompson, 2005) are considered of vital importance.

However, both research studies in academic writing and classroom observation revealed that source-based writing proved to be a sophisticated and challenging task for most L2 students. In my university we also use source-based writing in our instruction and assessment as a part of reading-writing undergraduate course that is offered within the scope of EAP program. Everyday practice in the classroom has shown that students struggle to integrate source-based information into their writing. Consequently, as a teacher and researcher, I was motivated to investigate challenges and progress students experience in source-based writing. Thompson et *al*. (2013) assert that shifting the focus of academic writing research to student perceptions is a necessity because it would empower us as educators "to work reflexively on furthering our understanding of our students' textual and language learning worlds" (p.101). Therefore, by exploring the following research questions, this study aimed to track L2 students' perceptions about their use of sources, challenges that they associate with source-based writing, and what needs to be done in order to assist their development as academic writers.

Research questions:

1) What factors affect students' selection of information from external texts to be used in their writing?

2) What are the purposes of students' self-reported citation practices?

3) How do students perceive their performance in self-reported use of source materials?

4) What needs to be done in order to enhance student performance in the source-based writing assessment task?

The findings based on this study may offer insights for L2 learners in diverse higher education settings as most of the L2 learners go through similar challenges. The results of the study are hoped to contribute to the growing literature on perception of learners towards integrated writing assessment and provide insights into writing instruction and assessment in EAP programs.

2. Literature Review

Source-based writing is gaining prominence in the field of L2 writing on grounds of "internalization of higher education and subsequent growth in the number of L2 writers studying through the medium of English, both in English-and non-English speaking countries" (Wette, 2017, p.46). Student perceptions of progress and ongoing challenges in source-based writing for novice writers have been explored in L2 writing literature (Gu & Brooks, 2008; Hirvela & Du, 2013; Hu & Lei, 2012; Pecorari, 2003; Shi, 2010). Thompson, Morton and Storch (2013) argue that selecting and integrating source-based information effectively into academic writing is a challenging task because it "requires students to perform the kinds of linguistic and authorial intertextual manipulations that enable them to summarize, paraphrase, synthesize source materials effectively" (p.99) and use citation systems accurately to overcome issues associated with plagiarism to signal textual ownership. Previous studies have also concurred learning how to reference borrowed ideas form external texts presented challenges for undergraduate students (Starfield, 2002; Thomphson, 2005).

Another challenging aspect of source-based writing tasks concerns reading comprehension. Prior research (Wette, 2010) have concluded that being able to comprehend external readings played a significant role in source-based writing. Jamieson and Howard (2011) investigated the citation practices of 174 freshman students from different institutions in the United States, analyzing their research-based writing. The study showed that majority of the students were unable to understand the main ideas in depth. Consequently, they could not interact with the ideas from across their external sources and integrate these into their own writing in a meaningful way.

In addition, establishing meaning connections between ideas manifested in source-materials and students' own writing to develop one's own voice and developing textual ownership is often considered as complex. According to Thompson et al. (2013) "textual re(construction)" (developing a voice of one's own), as opposed to animating and ventriloquizing other's ideas, is a complex, power-related and transformative experience (p.106).

Another line of research into source-based writing has investigated the source use and rhetorical functions of citations in student writing. Petrić (2007) summarized the functions of citations in her functional typology as seen in Table 1 below.

Table 1

Petrić's framework of citation functions

Function	Description
Attribution	Attributing information to source(s)/author(s)
Exemplification	Giving illustrations to convey the writer's statement, preceded by 'for example' or 'e.g.'
Further reference	Referring to sources to provide more information, preceded by 'see' in parenthesis/brackets
Statement of use	Stating sources and identifying the purpose of their use
Application	Establishing connections between ideas cited and student writer's work
Evaluation	Evaluating sources using evaluative language
Establishing links between resources	Establishing connections between sources
Comparison with resources	Pointing out similarities and differences between the student writer's work and sources
Other	Cases in which the relationship between the citing sentence and source is obscure/unclear

In their study with L2 undergraduate students enrolled in first year writing course Lee, Hitchcock and Casal (2018) analyzed rhetorical functions and writer stance using a corpus of 100 source-based student writings. They concluded that L2 students employed a limited range of citation functions which predominantly relied on attribution for knowledge display and adopted a non-committal stance, acknowledging or distancing themselves from cited sources. Findings indicated the deference of L2 student writers to the perceived authority of sources and narrow range of purposes for citations. Similarly, when it comes to students' citation and source use, many scholars have asserted that (unlike experienced writers) novice writers predominantly make use of attribution (Mansourizadeh & Ahmad, 2011; Petric, 2007; Wette, 2017, 2018) and fail to take a sufficiently evaluative stance towards their sources (Pecorari, 2003, Petric, 2007; McCulloch, 2012).

Consequently, source use and citation skills should receive more attention in EAP instruction to ensure students' academic success (McCulloch, 2012; Mansourizadeh & Ahmad, 2011; Petric, 2007; Wette, 2017). Mansourizadeh and Ahmad (2011) argue that novice writers need deliberate and timely instruction into efficient and strategic use of different citation types and functions. To this end, they suggest awareness raising activities of possible types and rhetorical functions of citation.

3. Research Methodology
Research Context
This study was carried out at the EAP program that is offered to freshman students in a private university in Turkey. Within the scope of the EAP course, students are trained in academic and language skills for their interdisciplinary undergraduate studies. As one of the teachers of this course, I met my freshman students from various departments for 4 contact hours a week over an academic semester of 16 weeks. Course materials comprised of abridged academic texts about different aspects of sustainability. Instructional materials and classroom practice required students to read, discuss, and integrate course content into their writing. Similarly, the assessment task of the course included a response writing activity of 400 words in which student writers read a short external text and write their response to it by integrating text-based information through academic citation. The research process was embedded into instruction because as the researcher/teacher I asked my students to go over teacher's written feedback, analyze their citation practices, and consequently respond to the questionnaire items.

Participants
Participants of the study were 22 freshmen students from various departments taking the undergraduate EAP course at a Turkish University. Students were informed about the scope of the research and volunteers were asked to fill-out the pen and paper reflection questionnaire in class.

Data Collection
Student perceptions were surveyed through an open-ended questionnaire. Students were required to go over the exam task and teacher's written feedback to their actual writing performance before they critically reflected on the questionnaire items. They were asked to examine their writing and the teacher feedback they had received before they respond to the questions. This questionnaire was designed to explore the research questions targeted in this study. Open-ended format was chosen to elicit student response because on the contrary to close-ended items, which offer a set of limited responses, open-ended questions may elicit opinion of the respondents without influence from the researcher. Open-ended questions reveal the responses that individuals give spontaneously, "and thus avoiding the bias that may result from suggesting responses to individuals, a bias which may occur in the case of close-ended questions" (Reja, Manfreda, Hlebec & Vehovar, 2003, p.161). I delivered the hard copies of the questionnaire in our class time. It took approximately 45 minutes and as the researcher and teacher, I responded to their questions regarding the clarity of the items, and my feedback to their written performance.

Data Analysis
Open-ended questionnaires were analyzed inductively through thematic content analysis. Student response to the open-ended questions were (re)read and coded individually. Then, the researched examined the associations between determined codes, and consequently identified

the emerging themes (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007).

4. Findings and Discussion

Factors that affect students' selection of information from external texts to be used in their writing

Based on student response regarding factors that affect their choice in borrowing ideas from external texts, it can be inferred that students have different approaches. Some express that they seek for the main ideas and the details that they think important. Then they prioritize these ideas and choose mostly to report them. Some student writers comment that they solely depend on the ideas outlined by the author to form their own arguments as stated by the following quotation:

"First I read the paragraph slowly then I read it again faster when I read it fast I find the important parts, for example main idea supporting idea and information then I mark them and I generate my own ideas".

On the other hand, some students imply that they engage with the text at a deeper level and they consider their stance towards the topic. They tend to choose text-based information that supports their stance as student writers. One of the respondents suggested: "I chose the most asserted and bolder points to cite, along with the ones I wished to comment on or expand I look for points that stood well with my stance and supported my ideas". Furthermore, some pointed out that they select information which conveys disagreement with the author of the external text. To illustrate, it was stated: *"In my writing I choose to cite the ideas that support my claim and ideas. I also choose ideas that don't reflect the issue (topic) properly because the writer is biased towards one end and focuses narrowly only in one direction".* It is important to note here that students seemed to pay attention to purposes of citations when they decide to select information from sources to be used in their writing.

Purposes of students' citations

Data analysis revealed that students mostly made use of citations with purpose of attribution. Table 2 summarizes the participant response and how frequently a citation function was mentioned.

Citation function	Examples for self-reported use of citations	f
Attribution	I used citations to show the writer's ideas about the topic	14
Statement of use	To support my idea, I tried to choose some key sentences in my citations	5
Exemplification	When I used information from exam reading, I gave examples from the author. I said that by changing some words	2
Application	I used citations to either show a significant figure or organization had also stated something similar; or to show how there was a useless, baseless argument put forth by a significant figure or organization. Thus, showing directly what I agreed or disagreed with.	1
Comparison with sources	I used quotation to show how we have similar thoughts with author.	1

In some rare instances, student response pointed out to wider range of citation purposes. To illustrate, one of the students reported: *"I mainly use direct quotation, mostly when I give examples. In my writing when I don't want to mess with the flow of the sentence I choose to use paraphrasing. After a citation I always explain why I used that citation".* It can be inferred that this student writer self-reported her/his use of application and exemplification functions of citations in the writing. However, as I mentioned above such responses were scarce.

These findings concur with the previous research studies which reported L2 student writers lack critical assessment of source material (Lee et al., 2018) and display a limited repertoire and understanding of rhetorical functions, depending mainly on attributing their source material (Mansourizadeh & Ahmad, 2011; Petric, 2007; Wette, 2017, 2018).

Student perception of their performance in source-based writing

When participants were asked about strengths and weaknesses that they perceive in their writing performance in the source based-writing assessment task, a variety of areas were mentioned. To begin with, half of the respondents (50%) think that when they used information from the exam reading they were able to you use them contextually appropriately. In other words, they believe that the borrowed information from the reading fits into

the context and their flow of ideas in their writing. On the other hand, the other half is critical of their performance stating that their citation practices were not contextually appropriate (27%) or partially appropriate (23%) in the context. One student posits: *"No, my citations did not fit the context in my writing. Though I tried to, I failed in many of my attempts. My biggest citation flaw is that some of my ideas do not have a steady flow, and I believe that my writing suffers from much repetition of the same paraphrased idea(s)".* Whereas another participant postulated lack of accurate reading comprehension inhibited contextual appropriacy at places in his/her writing, saying that; *"I think I did half and half. Why I could not use citations meaningfully is because I kind of did not fully understood the writer's point and just wrote what I thought the article was about".* As noted by Wette (2010), reading comprehension impacts mastery of source-based writing on a large scale.

Furthermore, the student writers considered that their source-based writing performance was good in terms of paraphrasing, summarizing, comprehending the main ideas in the given text and their use of grammar. However, they deemed organization, use of vocabulary, building and supporting their argument by borrowing information form an external reading text and utilizing mechanics of citation (using the APA format accurately) as challenges of integrated writing. Many student writers mentioned the difficulty of relating their own ideas to the main ideas of the author of the external reading text. One of them argued: *"I should learn to vary my supporting ideas and explain my own ideas in a better way. I think I am weak about combining my ideas to the topic and main ideas in the reading. Tring to completely grasp the authors ideas and learning about how to explain my stance and choosing suitable citations can help me fully deliver my message and support it".* This finding is congruent with prior research studies which reported being unable take an evaluative stance towards sources prevents L2 writers from building their own argument (McCulloch, 2012, Jamieson & Howard, 2011).

Perceived actions to enhance student performance in the integrated writing assessment task

Data analysis revealed several themes (summarized in Table 3) regarding the perceived actions that are believed to impact student performance positively in source-based writing assessment tasks.

Table 3

Summary of student perception towards activities to improve source-based writing skills

Suggested activities to improve source-based writing skills	n
More practice in source-based writing	12
Analyzing citation practices of actual student writings	5
Expansion of vocabulary knowledge	4
Remedial work in improving reading skills	3
Analyzing the criteria for the source-based writing assessment task	2
More classroom discussions which encourage peer learning	2

For some students, mastery of source-based writing was related to having more exposure to practice. It was suggested that more practice in paraphrasing, using mechanics (APA) in citation and focusing on how to integrate ideas of the student writer with the main ideas presented in the external texts were deemed elemental. Many students expressed that they needed to learn about how to cite in a better way. A respondent stated: *"I find APA style citations a bit confusing especially when citing information which is already cited by the writer of the exam reading. Reading more practice papers with APA style citations would help me improve".* Majority of the students highlighted the importance of having more practice in source-based writing. One of the student writers associated further practice into source-based writing with improvement of both academic writing and general language competency, stating the following: *"Having more practice in response writing before exam would be better for me. For my own sake, writing reaction parts are the most beneficial thing in order to improve my academic writing skills. I also enjoy discussing my reaction verbally and I believe it improves my English in a practical aspect".*

Student writers also perceived analyzing citation practices of actual student writings and analyzing the criteria for the source-based writing assessment task in enhancing their perfor-

mance in the integrated writing assessment task. One of the students indicated: "*More example that written by students might help me because I read and learn from them*". In addition, students consider remedial work and further practice in improving reading skills as prominent for improving their source-based writing performance. Some respondents believed that they need to read more for improving themselves in reading for main ideas as well as using the texts as a model for organization, and a repository for grammar and vocabulary use. *"I simply need to read more scholarly articles, examine their format and try to implement their precision in my own writing, both in summarizing, and in response writing".*

These findings imply that rather than reducing the focus of academic writing instruction in EAP courses to only mechanics of citations or know-how of avoiding plagiarism for mastery of source-based writing tasks, instruction should prioritize offering ways of meaningful engagement with the sources. To illustrate, similar to student suggestions elicited in this study regarding the importance of examining example writings, Lee et *al.* (2018) claim "one of the most important activities in which teachers could engage learners is helping them notice various citation forms, functions, and stance types in models of exemplary student writing and their own writing" (p. 10). Participants of this study have also stressed the importance of analyzing citation practices of others to gain better control of synthesizing text-based ideas and integrating these in to their own writing.

5. Conclusion

This study examined self-reported source use and citation practices of L2 writers and elicited their perceptions as to ways of making progress in source-based writing. Findings showed that students mostly pay attention to the main ideas and details that they deem important when they decide about what information they would like to borrow from sources. It was also inferred that they consider purposes of citations when they select text-based information. However, participants have also reported that they relied on attribution to sources overly. Thus student awareness of utilizing different purposes for citations gains importance for more effective source use and deeper engagement with sources.

Scholars have argued that developing proficiency in using sources in writing improves gradually provided that there is ongoing attention to using sources strategically throughout students' undergraduate education and EAP instruction should aim

at developing key capabilities (Wette, 2017). Thus, analysis of range and extent of difficulties student writers experience in developing integrated writing may provide educators with insights into instructional design of L2 writing courses. Furthermore, eliciting student perceptions regarding actions to be taken may provide guidance for setting priorities for teaching and testing of source-based writing. This study relied on student perceptions as its only line of data collection. Future studies may make use of actual student writings to compare verbal accounts of source use to actual student performances. Also, further research may examine citation practices and source use longitudinally.

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Appendix: Reflection questionnaire
1. How did you go about selecting information from the exam reading to cite in your writing?
2. Examine your use of citations. What is/are the purpose(s) of your citations?
3. When you used information from reading sources (articles) did you use them appropriately**?** (Does it fit into the context-your flow of ideas/arguments?) Why? / Why not?
   Please explain.
4. What are you doing well in terms of writing using sources (in this exam your source being the exam reading?
5. What do you think you still need to learn more about this skill (writing using sources)? What do you find difficult?
6. What would help you improve your abilities to master this assessment task (writing using sources)?

СПРИЙНЯТТЯ СТУДЕНТАМИ ІНТЕГРОВАНИХ ЗАВДАНЬ З АКАДЕМІЧНОГО АНГЛІЙСЬКОГО МОВЛЕННЯ

Аслі Гюктюрк Саглам

Анотація

Дослідження є спробою зрозуміти, як студенти, що вивчають англійську мову як іноземну, використовують інформацію із зовнішніх джерел та з якими труднощами стикаються у процесі виконання інтегрованих завдань з академічного читання та письма. На основі спостережень за студентами першого курсу під час занять з англійської мови для академічних цілей було проаналізовано уявлення студентів про використання академічних джерел, мету та особливості цитування та ті аспекти письма, які слід вдосконалити для досягнення прогресу в академічному письмі. Окрім методу спостережень, було застосовано метод анкетування: 22 першокурсника було опитано за допомогою відкритої анкети. Анкету, націлену на отримання перцептивних коментарів першокурсників щодо власних досягнень в академічному письмі, було запропоновано після виконання студентами екзаменаційного інтегрованого завдання з читання та письма. Тематичний аналіз змісту письмових робіт та статистичний аналіз виявили низку труднощів, пов'язаних з практикою ефективного та належного цитування в контексті академічного письма. Дослідження має практичне значення для навчання англійського академічного письма з метою вдосконалення практики цитування.

Ключові слова: англійське академічне письмо, інтегровані завдання з читання та письма.

BIO

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